



*Superintendent Denise Juneau believes we need to set an expectation for every child in Montana to graduate from high school. In today's global economy, a quality education is the key to economic prosperity for our young people. More than 2,000 Montana students drop out of school each year. We can do better.*

## What is Graduation Matters Montana?

Superintendent Juneau has launched a multi-pronged, statewide effort to ensure that Montana's public schools are meeting the goal of graduating more students ready for college and careers.



### Student-Centered Policies

Oftentimes, adults plan and discuss educational policy, but we rarely talk to the people who will be most directly affected by our plans and discussions: the students. In the Fall of 2010, Superintendent Juneau convened the first-ever Superintendent's Student Advisory Board. Forty students from thirty-one communities gathered to discuss ways to improve the state graduation rate and to address school climate issues. They

reported that they seek relevant coursework and real-world experiences, clear and consistent rules, a positive school climate and meaningful relationships at their schools. As a result of Student Advisory Board input, Superintendent Juneau is launching an "I Pledge to Graduate" campaign this fall to help students set their sights on graduation.

### Local Graduation Matters Initiatives

Superintendent Juneau seeks to support locally-designed and implemented Graduation Matters initiatives that engage schools, communities, businesses and families in a focused effort to increase the number of students who graduate.

Supt. Juneau is convening the AA school districts in Summer 2011 to plan and share promising practices and is helping to identify and leverage resources to turn plans into action. OPI will serve as a clearinghouse for best practices that work and truly make a difference in the lives of Montana students.

### Objectives of Graduation Matters Montana:

1. *Increase the rate of Montana students graduating from high school college- and career-ready.*
2. *Establish a support network between schools, businesses and community organizations for student success.*
3. *Create school-based and community-based opportunities for student success.*

## Policy Change

Superintendent Juneau recently recommended adoption of the Common Core State Standards in English Language Arts and Math to the Board of Public Education. The Common Core Standards are higher, clearer and more rigorous than our current standards and will prepare our students for college and to compete in today's global economy. She also convened a task force to review Montana's accreditation standards to make them more performance-based and to provide school districts needed flexibility to focus on results.



During the 2011 Legislative Session, Superintendent Juneau championed bills to raise the legal drop out age from "age 16" to "age 18 or upon graduation" and to establish common definitions and procedures for anti-bullying policies for all school districts. Superintendent Juneau will continue to support legislation and administrative policies that set high expectations for students and create safe school climates.

## Relevant Coursework and Career Preparation

In Montana, all high school students take at least one career and technical education course, and over half take three or more. Students are clear in their desire for classes that relate to real-world experiences and hands-on learning.

Superintendent Juneau is working to expand programs that are proven to work such as Jobs for Montana's Graduates (JMG). JMG provides classroom instruction and work-based learning opportunities to students in grades seven through twelve and high school dropouts ages 16-18. Ninety-five percent of students who participate in JMG graduate from high school.

## I Pledge to Graduate Campaign



Research shows that students are more likely to reach a goal if they commit to meeting it and identify their own motivations. This fall, Superintendent Juneau, in partnership with local school districts and the Student Advisory Board, is launching an "I Pledge to Graduate" campaign.

Students will pledge to one another to graduate and identify specific reasons why graduation is important to them. This high-profile campaign will focus statewide attention on Graduation Matters Montana, engage community and business partners, involve social networking and on-line activism and highlight student voices and ideas.

**For more information on Graduation Matters Montana** contact Deborah Halliday, Policy Advisor, Community Learning Partnerships, at 406-444-3559 or [dhalliday@mt.gov](mailto:dhalliday@mt.gov).